



Hunting with Hounds in Virginia

A Way Forward

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) has received an increasing number of comments recently regarding the use of dogs for deer hunting in Virginia. While this is not a new issue, the degree to which this is becoming more of an issue is reaching a new level.

Factors influencing the increasing number of concerns include: a growing human population in Virginia of about 7.5 million citizens; land use changes; loss of hunting lands; changing landownership patterns (i.e. smaller holdings) and disregard for the property rights of landowners.

At the July 17, 2007 VDGIF Board Meeting, the Wildlife Division staff recommended, and the Board approved, an approach to addressing this issue, which is similar to that used to develop the Virginia white-tailed deer management plan and the Virginia black bear management plan. This process will involve the use of a citizen stakeholder approach including the following:

1. Conduct focus group meetings with individual interest groups (landowner based organizations, bear houndsmen, deer houndsmen, raccoon hunters and fox hunters).
2. Create a stakeholder advisory group to consider issues identified by the focus groups.

A technical committee comprised of biologists, law enforcement officers and others will support this effort. The technical committee will provide information to the stakeholder advisory group as they address the various issues and develop strategies.

The Department's goal will be, "to provide diverse opportunities for hunting with hounds in Virginia in a manner that is fair, sportsmanlike and consistent with the rights of private property owners and other citizens."

DGIF staff will recommend the involvement of an independent, professional human dimensions consultant to accomplish this task with the resulting report and recommendations available by the fall of 2008 prior to the 2009 legislative session.

Process Timeline

Identify key stakeholders	July-October 2007
Identify major issues	July 2007 – January 2008
Facilitate stakeholder and staff dialogue	February – November 2008
Produce recommendations to achieve the hound hunting recreational goal	November 2008

Identify Key Stakeholders

- VDGIF and Virginia Tech responsibility
- Include diverse stakeholders across VA
 - Hunters who do and do not use hounds
 - Other recreationists (hikers, campers, etc.)
 - Private landowners and other citizens
 - Local governments
 - Public land management agencies
 - Animal welfare and other wildlife interests
 - NGO's and Others

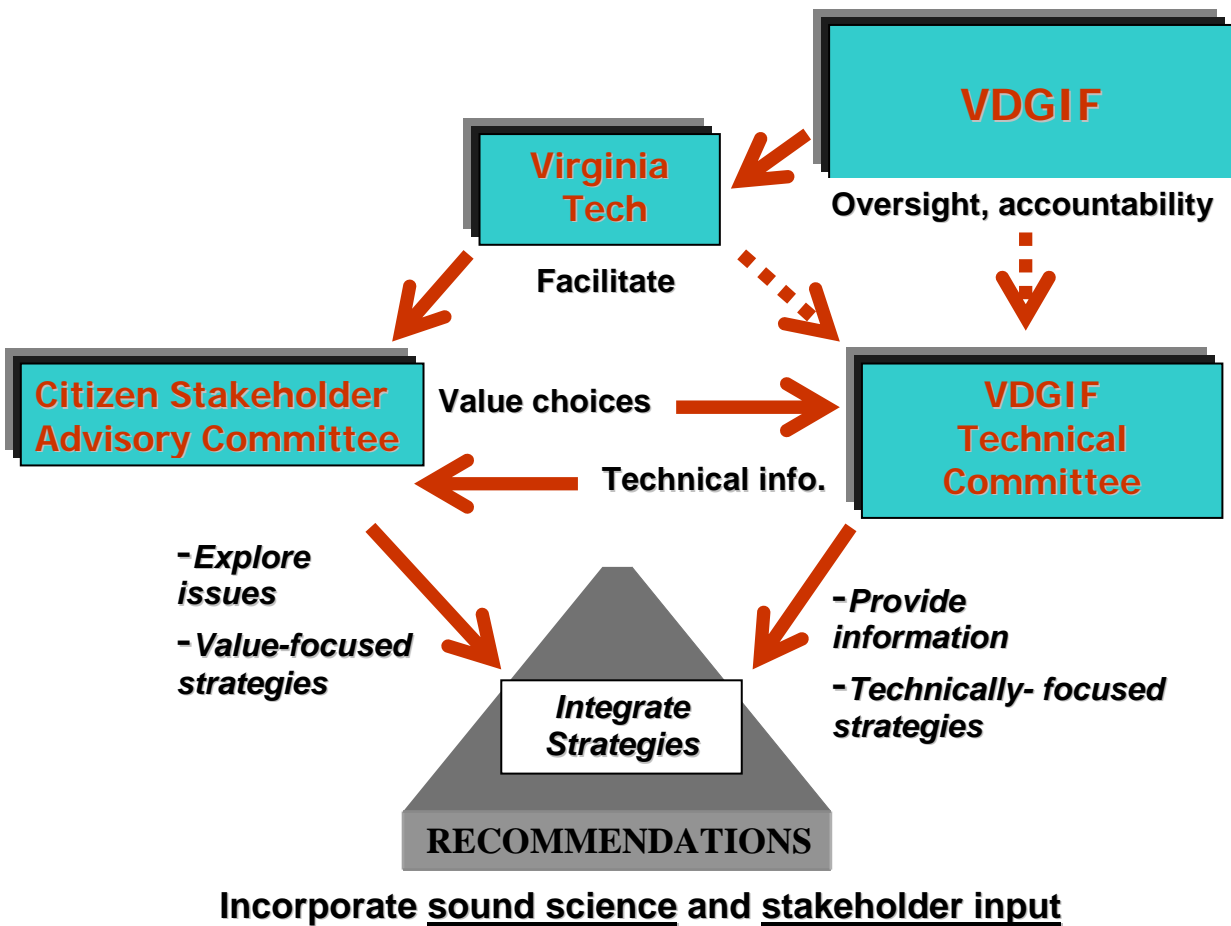
Identify Major Issues

- VDGIF staff will review biological, sociological, administrative, legal, economic, political aspects
- Public internet survey/web forum
- Stakeholder focus groups (group interviews with each interest separately)

Facilitate Dialogue

- One or more stakeholder advisory committees made up of key stakeholder representatives
- VDGIF technical committee made up of Wildlife, Law, and other staff
- Virginia Tech facilitation team
- VDGIF administrative oversight

The Process



Recommendations

- Draft report (joint committee work)
- Broad public review of draft report
- Potential solutions are not restricted:
 - Non-regulatory, educational efforts
 - Regulatory amendments
 - Statutory amendments